

PSJ3

Exhibit 234

From: Ducca, Anita
Sent: Thursday, December 06, 2007 4:22 PM
To: 'Kevin Nicholson'
Subject: Methadone Article
Attachments: DOJ_methadone.pdf

Methadone OD Deaths Soaring

The Associated Press

Published: Dec 6, 2007

WASHINGTON - The rate of drug users who fatally overdose on methadone, a prescription that curbs heroin addiction, is skyrocketing at an alarming pace, a new Justice Department study shows.

The report, released Wednesday, found that methadone-related deaths rose nationwide from 786 in 1999 to 3,849 in 2004 - a 390 percent increase.

By comparison, people who died from cocaine overdoses rose by 43 percent, from 3,822 to 5,461 over the five-year period, which reflects the latest statistics available.

"Methadone is a safe and effective drug when used as prescribed," concluded the report by the Justice Department's National Intelligence Drug Center. "However, patients who are prescribed methadone need to be monitored by a physician."

Methadone suppresses symptoms that drug users experience when going through withdrawal from heroin and other opiates. During the last decade, it also has been used as a cheaper alternative to pain relievers such as OxyContin and Vicodin.

The rising methadone death rate is, in part, the result of more doctors prescribing it to help patients with pain, the report found. The study also noted increases in thefts as the drug is being shipped from manufacturers to pharmacies and other retailers.

Most methadone-related deaths occurred when it was used with alcohol or other drugs, the study found. Some were the result of overdoses or misuse of legitimately prescribed methadone by patients who failed to get proper counseling from doctors on how to safely take it.

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